



Department of Development Services
Planning Division
Meeting Minutes of the
Planning & Zoning Commission
(Approved)

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2010

Commissioners Present

Sandra Bobowski
Temple Shannon
David Blatt
Edwin Vargas, Jr.
John Lupo, Jr.

Staff Present

Roger J. O'Brien
Kim Holden
Jonathan Mullen
Don Chapman
Stephanie Kruel

Commissioners Absent

Gerry Pleasent, Alternate
David Jorgensen, Alternate

I. Public Listening Session

- a. Comments will be taken regarding One City, One Plan, Hartford's Plan of Conservation and Development for the Behind the Rocks, Downtown, Frog Hollow, South Green, and South Downtown neighborhoods.**

Chairperson Bobowski called the special meeting to order. She gave a brief summary of the five theme meetings that had occurred in the fall as well as the previous two listening sessions. She stated that many comments made during those meetings were incorporated into the second draft of the Plan. She then stated that Roger O'Brien would be giving a presentation regarding One City, One Plan and how it affects the Behind the Rocks, Downtown, Frog Hollow, South Green, and South Downtown neighborhoods.

Mr. O'Brien gave a summary of the main goals of One City, One Plan, and stated that the main focus of the meeting would be the future land use map for the featured neighborhoods.

Mr. O'Brien explained the purpose of a land use map and how it is different from zoning. He discussed the generalized land use categories and noted that the decrease in purple areas in the future land use map was because there is now a distinction between industrial and commercial land use categories, when there was not in 1996. He also compared the differences between the existing and future land use maps.

Mr. O'Brien then asked for questions regarding any of the maps displayed in the room.

An audience member asked what the grey area distinguished as “ROW” was and Mr. O’Brien stated that this meant Right Of Way, including a road, highway, or railroad.

An audience member asked if there was a chance that Interstate 91 would ever be diminished. Mr. O’Brien stated that it is an interesting concept, however it is not in the Plan because it would not be feasible.

Mr. O’Brien then gave an explanation of each of the land use categories listed on the future land use map, and gave examples of locations in the City where each is implemented. He stated that the land use map is the basis for zoning regulations.

Mr. O’Brien then welcomed Mayor Perez into the conversation.

Mr. O’Brien and David Corrigan, the chair of the Frog Hollow NRZ, discussed the goals in the Plan designated for Frog Hollow and asked the audience to offer any further comments or suggestions.

At an audience member’s request, Mr. Corrigan described the boundaries of the Frog Hollow neighborhood and NRZ.

Mr. O’Brien asked Mr. Corrigan where they envision a community center in Frog Hollow.

Mr. Corrigan stated that Washington Street in the learning corridor is where they have envisioned their community center project taking place, however they are still looking for locations that could better tie the project together.

Mr. O’Brien asked if any audience members had other comments regarding Frog Hollow.

An audience member stated that the bicycle lane should be extended all the way down Capitol Avenue past where it stops at the overpass near the railroad tracks.

A member of the audience asked if there should be a section for the revitalization of Pope Park. Mr. O’Brien stated that it is a part of the Plan and they could include it in this presentation.

Principal Planner Jonathan Mullen discussed the proposed land use map for the Behind the Rocks neighborhood.

Mr. O’Brien discussed the goals in the Plan designated for the Behind the Rocks neighborhood.

An audience member described illegal dumping that occurs along Flatbush Avenue near Walmart.

Ted, a member of the audience asked if any money would be used to focus on the revitalization of Hyland Park. Mr. O’Brien stated that Hyland Park is mentioned in the Plan.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the proposed land use map and goals that are designated for the South Green neighborhood in the Plan.

An audience member asked if there could be a tourist information center located in the South Green Park since the area is very historical.

An audience member asked if there are any proposals to redesign South Green Park. Mr. O'Brien stated that there are recommendations in the Hartford 2010 Plan to improve South Green Park and that they are located in the action items of One City, One Plan.

Ted, a member of the audience, asked where the gateway to Park Street project stood in the list of priorities. Mr. O'Brien stated that it is an important intersection and that a plan for that area needs to be created.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the next neighborhood that would be discussed is South Downtown.

Glen, the Chair of the strategic planning committee for the South Downtown NRZ, discussed the proposed land use map for the South Down neighborhood.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the goals in the Plan that are designated for the South Downtown neighborhood.

An audience member asked if there are any proposals to build a parking garage in the neighborhood to accommodate the working people during the day and visitors to the Bushnell at night so that the other vacant lots can be developed.

Mr. David Panagore stated that the i-Quilt project incorporates that idea. He also stated that the MDC, the State and the Bushnell are coordinating for a pilot project in that area that involves a green parking lot.

John Gale discussed all of the parking lots on Capitol Avenue, Washington Street and Buckingham Street, and how he felt they are unnecessary and should be developed.

A discussion occurred between Mr. O'Brien and members of the audience regarding different parking structure options that have been proposed for the area.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the next neighborhood that would be discussed is Downtown.

Mike Zaleski of the Hartford Business Improvement District discussed the boundaries of Downtown and how One City, One Plan incorporates goals that will bring all surrounding neighborhoods into Downtown and Downtown into the surrounding neighborhoods.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the goals in the Plan that are designated for Downtown.

An audience member asked how the i-Quilt plan ties into Once City, One Plan. Mr. O'Brien stated that walkability and arts and culture connectivity are goals of both plans and are therefore easily tied into One City, One Plan.

An audience member asked if there are any proposals for light rail from Union Station to Bradley Airport. Mr. O'Brien stated that there are none that he knew of however, there are proposals for improvements to the freight rail lines that will eventually run to the airport.

Mr. O'Brien briefly discussed the plan for the high speed rail between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield that will be based around Union Station.

Mr. O'Brien discussed the residential densities and number of housing units in the Downtown neighborhood and what is being proposed for the next ten years. He stated that the goal is to increase the number of housing units by adding 4,500, with some of those being condominiums in order to increase homeownership.

Mr. O'Brien referred to Chapter 10 of the Plan where it discusses locations that could accommodate an increase in housing units.

An audience member asked how many of the proposed housing units will be affordable and Mr. O'Brien stated that they will in fact be work force housing, however unaware of a specific number.

An audience member asked if there are any thoughts about increasing the number of grocery stores in the Downtown neighborhood in order to accommodate the housing units. Mr. O'Brien said to stay tuned for any updates regarding this issue from Mayor Perez and David Panagore.

John Gale stated that the old Hilton site that fronts on Bushnell Street should be added as a location for potential Downtown housing units. He also reiterated that there should be new design criteria created for development downtown including standards for parking garages.

An audience member asked if there are any proposals for a movie theatre Downtown. Mr. O'Brien stated that the proposal Mr. Panagore had discussed earlier regarding the green parking lot would include the possibility of showing movies outdoors at night.

Commissioner Lupo, Jr. stated that a theatre would not be economically feasible in the Downtown neighborhood because of the parking and entrance fees associated with the business.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there will be one last listening session at the Rawson School for the public to come and contribute their questions and comments regarding the Plan. He then discussed the process that will follow in order to get it adopted in May. He stated that the Planning and Zoning Commissioners will take any further questions.

An audience member from the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice discussed a list of goals that the organization would like to see implemented through the Plan.

John Gale stated that he would like to encourage re-striping streets for bike lanes, supporting public art and implementing a light rail system to the airport. He stated that as long term goals he would like to encourage uncovering the Park River and replacing and repairing City sidewalks.

An audience member suggested implementing transitional or temporary affordable housing around Union Station for a crowd such as young professionals.

An audience member stated that a goal of the Plan should be to achieve national park status for Colt Park.

Dave Carrier encouraged the Commission to communicate with all City Departments to make sure that all ordinances are realistic and enforced.

Ted, an audience member, suggested exploring the connection between Union Station and the University of Hartford.

Commissioner Bobowski agreed that the surrounding universities should be encouraged to become participatory in the Downtown areas by running their own shuttles.

Commissioner Bobowski encouraged the audience to come to the last listening session and then closed the special meeting.

II. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Roger J. O'Brien, Secretary/Director